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BOADICEA:

A Tragedy.

BY

SIR COUTTS LINDSAY, BART.

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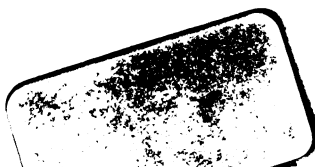
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BOADICEA:

A Tragedy.

BY

SIR COUTTS LINDSAY, BART.

AUTHOR OF 'ALFRED,'

AND

'EDWARD THE BLACK PRINCE.'

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1857.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

BRITISH.

BOADICEA, *Queen of the Iceni, and widow of the late King Prasutagus.*

SELMA, }
MALVINA, } *daughters of Boadicea.*

BELAUNUS, *the Arch-druid.*

HODA, }
HODEIRA, } *chiefs, and kinsmen to Boadicea.*

ORBO, *a Shepherd, and kinsman to Boadicea.*

CHORUS of *Druids and Druidesses, Bards, &c.*

ROMANS.

JULIUS, *a Roman Commander.*

ROMAN HERALD.

Messengers, Soldiers, Attendants, &c.

SCENE,—*During the First Act, within a Druidical Circle of stones; during the Second, in and about a Sacred Grove; during the Third, in the woods near London; during the Fourth, in the Temple of Jupiter; and during the Fifth, on a Field of Battle by the sea-cliffs.*

B O A D I C E A.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A Druidical Circle of stones in the midst of a broken, woody country, flanked by a range of hills — A funeral pile, on which lie the remains of PRASUTAGUS, King of the Iceni — Time, sunset. — BELAUNUS, HODA, HODEIRA, kinsmen to Prasutagus ; subjects, Druids, &c. &c.

BELAUNUS.

Hearken, ye kith and kindred of the dead !
Let the twelve nearest of his blood approach,
And break the funeral meats. Hodeira, first,
Being first of kindred, stand upon the right,
Beside the dead King's knee. Hoda, thou there
Upon the left—thou wert his dearest friend,
And nearest to his heart while yet he breathed,
Therefore be near it still. Thou, Galgacus,
Wilt by Hodeira stand, next of his kin ;
His nephew's children there, the sons of Guenn,
And Deirdre's offspring ; the two sons of Rhea,
His concubine, stand next, and Gododin ;
The shepherd Orbo then, kin to his blood,
And Glead, his foster-brother. Seat yourselves
Upon the earth.

[*They seat themselves.*

Bring here the bread and wine.

[*Bread and wine are brought. BELAUNUS takes of both ; fills a cup, and raises it towards the funeral pile.*

King ! rise and drink !

[*They offer the dead King wine.*

DRUID (*from the pile*).

The King will drink no more.

BELAUNUS,

(*casting the wine into the air*).

Take it then, air, and trouble not his spirit.

King, rise and eat!

[*They offer the dead King bread.*]

DRUID (*from the pile*).

The King will eat no more.

BELAUNUS.

Take it then, earth, and let his ashes rest.

[*Crumbles the bread on the ground.*]

Nearest of kin, arise and drink the wine.

HODEIRA.

Hail, King and brother, this I drink to thee!

BELAUNUS.

Pass on the cup; take it, thou next of blood.

HODA.

Hail, King and friend! Friend of my soul, farewell!

In better worlds may thy good spirit reign!

KINSMEN (*one after the other*).

Hail, Father! Hail, Father!

BELAUNUS.

Pass on the bread.

HODA.

We have all eat and drunk.

BELAUNUS.

Ye sons of Deirdre,
And ye of Rhea, take the bread and wine,
And serve the guests and kindred ; let not one
Go away craving, and so slight the dead ;
Let all be filled.

[Exeunt SONS OF DEIRDRE and RHEA, to distribute food to the crowd. BELAUNUS and the Druids continue the funeral rites. HODA and HODEIRA advance.]

HODA.

Dost thou go hence to-night ?

HODEIRA.

I journey with the Queen.

HODA.

And it may be
She bide a day or two ere she set forth ?

HODEIRA.

That is her present purpose.

HODA.

Doth Orbo leave to-night ?

HODEIRA.

For Mona, yes.

HODA.

With the unquiet rumour in his ears
That Rome hath fixed her greedy eyes on Mona.
'Twill prove a bloody spur to his poor steed ;
For, when most temperate, the youth rides hard,
And such news scald.

HODEIRA.

'Tis true. How runs thy mind
On the King's will ?

HODA.

That caution founders age
More certainly than rashness trips up youth.
'Twas an ill testament that cleft
A living kingdom into quivering halves,
And gave a part, one bleeding half, as sop
To stay the Roman appetite for all.
'Twill bring a curse on us, and on our children.

HODEIRA.

Avert it, God !

HODA.

That he hath left his daughters
Co-heiresses with Rome, hastens the swoop
Of the fell bird. That he hath left his widow
The guardian to his children, doth ensure
War to hell's gates.

HODEIRA.

It may be so ; indeed
I've seen the headlong passion flush her brow
With a most lurid and tempestuous red.
Still to the King she gave a noble duty ;
Altho' their great disparity of years,
And her full beauty, might have licensed her
In seeking to rule him.

HODA.

Her whole of being
Is nobly toned ; she honoured the dead King
With a most absolute respect of duty,
And ruled herself by him ; but I have seen her
Like to a burning mountain, unapproachable.

HODEIRA.

And this late testament ?

HODA.

Is wormwood to her ;
Yet, for it comes from him, she will accept it.

BELAUNUS (*from the pile*).

Summon the Queen.

HODEIRA.

Thou speak'st sad truth ; the root is in the soil
That shall fill Britain with a noxious weed,
Deadly to man and beast.

Some fitter season, when thou goest hence,
I will accompany thee a league or two ;
An', by God's grace, we may concert some course
To stave off near disaster.

HODA.

As you will.
'Twill be a bitter windy fall of night,
If I read well the language of the sky.

HODEIRA.

Night comes apace ; behind the forest, swift,
The sun descends.

HODA.

He sinketh fast indeed,
And with a mournful splendour,—so doth sink
A failing empire ; above his fiery orb
Vast piles of vapour culminate and press,
Which through the day have gathered in his rear,
And now o'erwhelm him.

HODEIRA.

Even so, he's gone,
And leaves a fading glory.

HODA.

Such a twilight
O'ershades our land ; upon the general weal
Darkness sinks down,—would its cavernous gloom
Were, like the temporal dimness of the heavens,
By a sure dawning limited with light !

But who shall say what cycle bringeth round
Our day again? 'Tis far remote—none here,
Nor their sons' sons, shall e'er behold its beams.

HODEIRA.

What dost thou brood o'er? whither wanders now
Thy vagrant spirit?

HODA.

Far out beyond the day;
After the sun, into yon golden world
Whither he hastens. Would I were gone hence!

HODEIRA.

Be not impatient. With this service ends
The youthful fealty of our best years.
Henceforth our duty must devolve on those
Beside whose younger aspect ours is gray;
We take the post of age,—for our old guides
Have ceas'd from out the thoroughfares of life,
And no more beckon to us from the van.
Our old King now is shrivelled to a husk,
Nor can his presence challenge as of yore,
The knee of duty or obedience mute.

HODA.

He hath gone home after the day's turmoil,
And sleeps secure through the still lapse of time.
Would I were gone!

HODEIRA.

Your thoughts precede you home,
To look upon the bright eyes of your child.

HODA.

A home, indeed !
Narrow, obscure, unenvied ; where the wolves
That ransack earth are powerless.

HODEIRA.

The Queen !

[Enter BOADICEA, SELMA, MALVINA—a procession of *Druidesses*
bearing incense—they encircle the funeral pile.

HODA.

She keeps her sorrow pent within its cave,
Which gnaws no less i' the dark.

HODEIRA.

The fire burns inly.

BOADICEA (*from the pile*).

Co-mates and kindred of my lord, the King,
I am alone to bid ye welcome now.
His lips are dumb that should have welcomed you,
His heart is cold that would have felt the glow
Of hospitable love. And ye, his subjects,
Whom he hath swayed with judgment many years,
Both mild and firm, hail to ye also ! Come,
And look upon his features the last time.
—Oh, husband, friend !

[*The kindred of the King and the people pass by,
and look on the face of the dead.*

CHORUS.

Come and behold him! Would ye see his face,
Not chang'd from his who wont to sit on high,
And from the throne give judgments on our race,
Approach, and view him nigh.
Death cannot rob him of his regal grace;
About his breast his beard's white tendrils lie;
And on the pallid arches of his brow
Eloquent majesty sits even now.

STROPHE I.

He never vanquish'd to enslave his kind,
But drew his regal right from kings of eld,
Ancient supremacy; and o'er the mind
Of nations empire held.
To guard the good, the evil man to bind,
To draw the sword, by a just cause impell'd,
To be his people's patriarch and guide,—
Thus rul'd he seventy winters, and then died.

ANTISTROPHE I.

How couldst thou leave thy little ones, thy care,
Who trusted to thee for their food and fire?
Thy comrades seek thee with a vain desire,
Who wont to share
All dangers with thee,—now our foes conspire
To make no second stroke; he seem'd a liar
Who told us thou hadst left us to our fate,—
Alas! 'tis true; we are convinc'd too late.

STROPHE II.

Wast thou so weary of thy dwelling-place?
Held'st thou this tenement too cramp'd a cage
For thy large spirit—earth too mean a stage,
That thou didst face
The middle night, all void of stars;
And where there never planet glow'd,
Nor the moon rode,
Didst take thy solitary way
Into a realm, how wan and gray?

ANTISTROPHE II.

Thy sires rose at thy coming, each in place,—
“We have expected thee, behold thy seat!
“Now are our numbers full, our chapter is complete,
“Last of our race!”
See if they take not of thee strict account
Of the realms given thee in paternal care;
Whether they fare
Well, as of old, or whether, in sudden flight,
Thou didst desert them, sick with a great blight.

FULL CHORUS.

Who can be master of the breath he draws,
And, as a God, say, Here I stay?
We are not certain of a single day:
Then blame not him. At Heaven's eternal laws
Why will ye murmur? Contrite, kneel and pray.
Whate'er of good or ill the hours portend,
Into God's hands commit yourselves, and bend.

BELAUNUS.

Lady, receive the torch.

BOADICEA.

Alas, farewell !

One parting kiss, the foolish last of all,
I lay on thy cold lips.—Daughters, he was
Of love most infinite, tender and true,
And loved you past all words. Kneel, kiss his hands,
Look in his reverend face ; ye will remember it
When I have long been dead.

[Takes the torch, and fires the pile.]

Fire, take hold, burn,

And cincture him about with majesty !

—Sad hairs, come off ! Ye grew in saucy strength

[Cutting off her hair.]

In love's fresh season ; then ye veil'd me round
In glad abundance ; now, nor loved nor prized,
Unto his memory for whom ye once
Were cherish'd and made fair, I dedicate
Your idle length. Husband, a long farewell !

BELAUNUS.

Now hath the King gone from us.

CHORUS.

Sorrow not !

BELAUNUS.

Victims have perished for him.

CHORUS.

Sorrow not !

BELAUNUS.

Along with him have gone his steed, his hounds,
And his well-battered weapons.

CHORUS. •

Sorrow not !

BELAUNUS.

For forty nights, at the return of dark,
From every crag that rears its face towards heaven
'Twixt sea and sea, death-fires have blazed for him.
Every green valley, in the middle night,
At morn or evening, hath returned the cry,
' The King will rise no more ! '

CHORUS.

Sorrow no more !

BELAUNUS.

The earth hath mourn'd for him ; the billowy seas
Did rave to the sad rocks ; the air and clouds
Wak'd him in rain and tempests.—Cease from tears
Thou widow'd of his body, who hast watch'd
For forty nights and days with faithful eyes,
Unknowing sleep or rest.

CHORUS.

Be comforted !

BELAUNUS.

Accept the respite of the hour that is.
Sorrow must have an end, and pain repose ;
Therefore be comforted, and weep no more.
Thou shalt to him, he ne'er return to thee.
Ye daughters, wipe the sorrow from your eyes ;
Keep your hearts still.

CHORUS.

Grieve now for him no more.

BELAUNUS.

Ye shall have yearnings of your own, sore pangs
And woes to sorrow for ; now, mourn no more !
Laughter and tears are short-lived, and expire
Ere ye can know their fulness. Grief, and joy,
And all emotions cease.

CHORUS.

Calm comes at last.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Sacred Grove—time, midnight—BELAUNUS and CHORUS discovered.

Enter a MESSENGER.

BELAUNUS.

Comes the Queen hither ?

MESSENGER.

As each hill I topp'd,
I saw her crown the summit I had left.
The eddyng dust cast backwards from my wheels
Had scarce subsided, when her horses' hoofs
Retoss'd it into air.

BELAUNUS.

Comes she in grief, or is't the flush of joy
That urges her to speed ?

MESSENGER.

Childless she hurries from her blacken'd hearth,
Her skirts still draggled with one daughter's blood ;
Worse woe, the other lives !

Enter BOADICEA.

BELAUNUS.

Hail, Queen and daughter ! What eclipse is this,
Which darkens thus thine eve ?

BOADICEA.

Lo, I will speak ;
And be ye judges 'twixt my fate and me.
Ye can be passionless ; my passion's all
That I retain in life. Be your bloods cool,—
'T is meet in you ; but temperate nature's self
Hath scorched my flesh and set my blood on flame,
Till I am ashes. Age in one short night
Hath seized upon me ; winter of the heart
Hath strewn my head with miserable snow,
Before my summer's o'er.

CHORUS.

What fate is this ?

BOADICEA.

Grief's waves flow over me ; I sink beneath
The ocean of my woe !

BELAUNUS.

Give your grief room in words ; 'twill bring you ease.
All pent up sorrows have a double force,
And, wanting words, rend for themselves a path,
Dragging life after them.

BOADICEA.

All words are void,
And language dumb of import, as the sound
That the wind whistles !

BELAUNUS.

Be patient, lady !

BOADICEA.

Thou hast no daughters—never hadst a child
Which sprang from forth the womb,—’t was not for thee
To feel thy heart beat when the callow thing
Sought from the breast its food ; thou hast not felt
The dear delight to yield it nourishment ;
The first attempts at infant prattle made
No music to thee—yet the chants of heaven
Have not a close more sweet ! ’T was not for thee
To watch the crimson of the bursting bud
Beneath the unripe green,—the morning dew
Could never give thy love a cause for joy ;
Nor could the blooming of the scented flower
Create a pride in thee ! Thou couldst not feel
When the swift tempest struck,—
My grief’s my own ; how canst thou judge my pain ?

BELAUNUS.

These are the chastening evils of the gods.

BOADICEA.

Oh God ! thou gavest
Of my own flesh two girls, twins of my life,
Which unpolluted in their mother’s eyes
And in the nation’s bloom’d. In form they were,
As in affection, matchless ; wrapt in their being
Was garnered up the whole stock of my life ;
Their language was my music, and their smile
The sun in which I lived,—their pulses’ life
Gave mine its wonted vigour ; all my soul
Was parted ’twixt the twain.—Now, God ! oh God !
Had they but withered in their infancy,
I had been bless’d !

CHORUS.

The gods have pity on thee! Side not thou
With this great misery against thyself;
For that way leads to death.

BOADICEA.

My youngest one, upon thy tender life
The fresh bloom greenly dwelt! Thy lips and eyes
Spoke to my love alone. Alas! my child,
My youngest, where art thou?

CHORUS.

Now falls the dew upon her parch'd up soul,
And all the vapours that the atmosphere
Of her deep grief has borne so heavily,
Condense and melt in tears.

BOADICEA.

Yes, I am weeping, and 't is fit I weep,
But not as yet—I will support the pain
Till I have spoken. I could utter that
Would rob you of the kindly power to weep,
And fill your eyes with blood.
—The moon was down, the eastern sky was dark,

Enter HODA at back of stage.

And we were sleeping; still oblivion spread
Her reign o'er all my household, such repose
As puts its faith in what is good in man,
And keeps no harness'd watch.—Oh, wretched faith!
Oh, vile repose! I'll never trust ye more,
Nor seek your aid, nor sleep again till death!

CHORUS.

Her strong emotion chokes her. Give her air.

BOADICEA.

They came, they went, and with them fire, and scourge,
And blood and ashes.—
Morn rose and look'd upon me; cold-eyed dawn
Wept, and I could not!

CHORUS.

Look, on her lips a deadly agony
Tongue-ties and strangles her. Give her support.

BOADICEA.

They were—they were—

CHORUS.

She fails! she faints! help her! Upon the stone
Beside the altar rest her.

BELAUNUS.

Where is her messenger? Is he not here?
What, noble Hoda! Ah, 't is thou indeed!
But that we had no word that thou didst come,
Or sign that thou stood'st by, we had been shamed.
How welcome is thy coming, judge thyself,
That best dost know how much we need thy help.
For me, the faculty of eyes and ears
Was riveted on her. All else seemed dead.

HODA.

I am but now arrived.

BELAUNUS.

Most welcome any way ! You find us here,
Like sleepers by a midnight scream uproused,
That grope about them in the dark, and quake,
Doubting strange things. What hath befallen the Queen ?
Some great affliction hath involved us all ;
But what, or how, or where, we blindly guess.

HODA.

I had as lief, Belaunus, you had found
Some other man, one in himself unscath'd,
Whose lips, not writh'd by any private grief,
Might have recounted from the first to last
All that befell, nor quivered as they spoke ;
But since the occasion makes demand of me,
'Tis a small matter in a great amount,
And scarce is worth the thought.
—That the old King had laid a bait for woe,
You all know well ; for he had halved his realm,
And made his children with his foemen share.

BELAUNUS.

Yes, part he cast as garbage to Rome's wolf,
And thought a maw, insatiate with the spoil
Of half a world, could be by that appeased.

CHORUS.

Wiser the woman who, to save one child,
Cast out the other from her flying car
Amidst pursuing wolves, to bribe them off,
That fed, but followed, ravening as before.

HODA.

The Romans took

What by his will was left them, and for a time
The widow'd Queen retain'd the other share.
Since then the flowers had ripened into fruit,
And the ripe grain been reap'd, when, yesterday,
The Queen came down to grace the harvest-home,
And her twin daughters bore her company.
The moon went down, the happy crowd dispersed,
And through each dwelling silence reign'd supreme.
I was not there—I was away, Belaunus ;
And towards the pastures by the river's banks
Had ridden with my men.—

We left all still ; my home and all it held
Seem'd doubly peaceful as the evening fell.
I was not there.

—In the third watch, they say, the ban-dogs bark'd.
The fools who watch'd thought the dogs bay'd the sea,
Which roars when east winds blow. Not one gave heed.

—An hour pass'd by ; then flames began to spring.
Not half so fast could men arise and arm,
As rose the cries for help, and shrieks past aid.
Down-struck, dispers'd, before the Romans fell
The armed few ; the many yielding ran ;
The women fled in vain, and in their fear
Into the jaws of their pursuers fled,
Who gave no mercy.

—They scourg'd the Queen, and with her daughters did
Even as they listed. I will recall no more !

BELAUNUS.

Great God, thy stripes fall heavy on our land ;

But the full sum with treble anguish comes
From other hands than thine ! Direct from thee
Thy mercies flow'd,—no proxy stood between ;
Nor came thy smile reflected from the brow
Of any delegate. Oh, no more call in
Others between to wield thy chastisements !
Strike us with sores, till crippled youth seem age ;
Dry up the springs, and wither all green herbs ;
Add plagues on plagues, turn foul th' embracing air,
And bid the sea run riot o'er the earth,—
More, more than these, 'neath all we 'll bow resigned !
'Tis better we should fall beneath thy hand
Than be by others spared.

CHORUS.

Look to the Queen !

She moves herself, she rises from her swoon ;
Widely dilate her eyes ; her nostrils spread ;
Dire is the look,—we dare not speak to her.

BELAUNUS.

Stand back ! no more ! This is beyond our earth !
Rapt in the agony, her body quakes.
White, as dried leaves in moonlight, quiver her lips !
She strives to speak—Behold, the veil is rent,
And sudden revelation yawns upon her !

CHORUS.

God be our guide, and consolation send !

BOADICEA.

Rises in her trance, and speaks.

A smell of blood comes upwards from the earth—

About my ankles flows the vital stream—
Wash and be glad! 'tis Roman blood to-day,—
To-morrow, who can tell?

CHORUS.

She doth behold
The future darkly mirrored in her soul,
Dim and far off.

BELAUNUS.

Hush! she will speak again.

BOADICEA.

Malvina, little one!

CHORUS.

Her youngest daughter past her vision flits,
And draws her heart out at her streaming eyes.

BOADICEA.

My little one, the little one I love,
What dost thou see amidst the smoke and flame?
No blood of ours is there. How they consume!
—Hold off! Hold off! Let them to ashes fall,
Be burn'd by fire, e'en as I'm burn'd by grief.
—Keep back! Keep back! She's down the fiery gulf!
[Sinks back.]

CHORUS.

There comes a retribution, laud we God!
Rome's blood for ours shall flow.

BELAUNUS.

Yet more,—be still!

BOADICEA.

The moonlight glimmers on a barren wold,
Where, thick as acorns in the sacred groves,
Our British fruit is scattered.

—A chain encompasses the land I love,
•Tight as the Python ; bone by bone gives way.
All's ended ; nothing is left to struggle for.
This feverish life no more shall ache the sense.
Upon the sea the waning moon low rests,
And o'er me gleams—here will I seek repose
Beneath these quiet waters.
Break not the silence, oh ye closing waves,
Nor murmur o'er my head ! All-lasting sleep,
The heavy burden of my life being o'er,
Close out the afflicting stars !

[Relapses into trance.]

BELAUNUS.

We are confounded ! With a whirlpool's suck,
We are drawn down th' inevitable gulf
Of rushing time ; struggles are all in vain,—
Round Britain wind the silent links of fate.

[Exeunt all but CHORUS.]

CHORUS.

Scourges of the human race,
Blood-stain'd tyrants of your kind,
Through the earth who kill or bind
Freedom's sons before the face
Of most just Heaven—
Sweet Innocence and quiet Peace
From earth ye have driven !

Earth's blooming plains to deserts ye have turn'd,
Their peoples 'slaved or slain ;
The fertile vales to ashes ye have burn'd,
Fruitful in vain !
Many a city, fallen 'neath your hands,
Lies but a heap of stones upon the scorching sands.

STROPHE I.

The lands through which ye have come
Have since lain dumb,
Or gasp'd at intervals a low lament ;
The rivers which ye have pass'd
Fled back aghast,
So thick with corpses were their currents pent,—
Till, shuddering with the tainted load,
Fain had they sought the springs from which they flowed.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Nor yet in friendly lands
Sheath'd ye your brands,—
Blood, flames, and blackened hearths behind ye left ;
The meek, who favour sought,
Ye work'd like beasts of draught ;
The proud ye goaded till of reason reft,—
Ever above ye, as ye pass'd along,
The kites and vultures wheel'd in greedy throng.

STROPHE II.

Th' indignant sea no more
Holds converse with the shore ;

He will not mingle with the tears of slaves ;
From touch of fettered feet
His waves in foam retreat,
And Ocean in his realms at distance raves.
The winds are big with the world's sigh,
And with their load of woe come sobbing by.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Were ye not men, and had ye not a home
Where dwelt your mothers, wives, and sires ?
Why did ye leave your household fires,
Hither to come ?
Ye were possessed of god-like dwellings there,
With many a woodland plain and upland pasture fair,—
What made ye seek
Lands poor and weak ?
What sought ye here ?

STROPHE III.

Now ye have wreak'd your will upon the earth.
Ye were the younger, yet from God
Ye held the knowledge due to elder birth,
And bore from him the rod.
But ye were blinded with the lust of power,
And thrust your elder brethren into chains ;
And so abused the God-like dower,
That ye have scor'd the earth with crimson stains,
Ne'er to be wash'd away by dews or wintry rains.

ANTISTROPHE III.

I knew an island, well loved of the waves !
In their blue arms they rais'd her into air
Upon a throne of white rocks and arch'd caves,
And crown'd her there.

Far round about her swept the ocean stream ;
She from the rough earth seem'd removed away ;
Her white cliffs glimmered like a wandering dream
To many a weary mariner astray.

STROPHE IV.

A happy island then
Of good and peaceful men,
Of modest maidens and long-loving wives ;
From foreign foes secure,
From all diseases pure,
Passing in fellow love their lengthened lives.
Time was ! time was ! Such hours are o'er,—
They can return no more !

ANTISTROPHE IV.

A shepherd on a steep
Gaz'd out upon the deep,
Which, like an azure sky, was spread below ;
Till, where the welkin press'd
The Ocean's quiet breast,
A snowy spot he saw, which seem'd to glow.
Poor fool ! in careless mind he thought that he
Had seen a flight of birds upon the distant sea.

STROPHE V.

Founder yon vessels, thou devouring Ocean !
Winds, rouse the billows with your scourge !
The sparkling seas, with dancing motion,
Support them onwards, and the soft winds urge—
I pray in vain ! they gain the island's verge !

Oh, Britain, Britain! then the tempest beat
Upon thy peaceful shore;
Not gusts of hurrying wind and chilly sleet,
But floods of gore!

ANTISTROPHE V.

Against a steel-clad foe
They fell in row,
And heap'd with dead the purple strand;
Some to the blood-stain'd tide
Rush'd down and died,
Grasping the weapons in their failing hand;
For, ever as the trumpet rung,
Against th' unyielding spears their naked breasts they flung.

FULL CHORUS.

Oh! wrap my eyes in mist,—I'll look no more;
And stop, for pity, stop with earth my ears;
I will not see again the gleam of spears,
I will not hear again the deafening roar!
Oh! weave a shroud about my head,
And lay me with the quiet dead!

SCENE II.

A woody dell, half in moonshine and half in shade. BOADICEA and attendant Maidens.

BOADICEA.

Thus far hath sorrow vanquish'd me. Alas!
Experience aids not in this battle-field,
Where my soul meets her foes. What seek ye, girls?

ATTENDANT.

Attendance on you, Madam, nothing more.
You seem yet faint and pale.

BOADICEA.

This heart is paler than my visage, girl!
And yet its pulses throb.—Leave me alone.

[Exeunt Attendants.]

Alone, completely! Henceforth o'er the earth
Still lonely I shall move—parted from all,
Broken, unlink'd, and torn away from those
That I have loved—bereav'd of all!
Passion, come triumph on me! Here I yield;
Dissolve me into tears—I'll strive no more
Against thy strait'ning band. Unbind the cord
Which strangles me; let loose this pent up storm.—
Come down, come down, thou bleak and bitter rain!
And pass away. No future hour for me
Shall the sun shine, but still some gloomy calm
May give me respite,—I so many years
Steeped to the lips in love, and giving back
E'en more than I received—and now! Come back,

My children ! let me see you once again :—
If from the home wherein your spirits rest
Ye can return, salute me on the cheek ;
Breathe in the likeness of the southern wind,
Or with the moonlight fall upon my breast,
And clasp me close ! Must I crave this in vain,
And clip about the ever wandering air
In fond desire, nor feel your answering kiss
Upon my lips ?

—Methinks my robe is spangled o'er with tears,
Tears not my own ; or are they mine indeed,
That, weeping, knew it not ? 'Tis even so ;
The stars before me tremble, and the moon
Through the same watery mist is all suffused,
As if she shar'd my grief. Can Heaven compassionate ?

—Ye lofty ministers to heaven and earth,
Calm in eternal light ! Ye moving Gods,
Who in the mazes of your dance do weave
The fated web of man ! cut short the thread
By which my life is hung, and let me die !
But first vouchsafe my prayer ; avenge my wrongs !
Whilst still this flickering flame
Clings to its ashes, give me o'er my foes
The triumph of one day ! Let me behold
For once their backs, and on their mailed loins
Drive the red lash, draw out the Roman blood
With the dishonour-giving scourge, as once
They striped me crimson ! Give me but twelve hours
To count out payment for the many years
This land hath soak'd in gore—then in the storm
Of my revenge snatch me away from earth !

[*Exit.*

Enter BELAUNUS and HODA.

HODA.

It is not fit that she command the tribes.

BELAUNUS.

There is none other living of the blood
Of our old kings. No lesser majesty
Will reunite them under one command.

HODA.

Unite them to one fall. She will stake all
To feed the growing passion of her heart.

BELAUNUS.

And yet you point no fitter leader out.
She will be ruled.

HODA.

Not by the breath of man.
Her fierce career will be like that dread star,
Which hurries its erratic course through space,
And at its zenith shakes its scourge o'er earth,
While sickness, famine, and the rage of war
Devour the seed of men. Would she were now
Beside my wife !

BELAUNUS.

What should you mean by that ?

HODA.

Many were slain that night, very ill spared.

BELAUNUS.

You wander wide, and speak I know not what !
Is not your household safe ?

HODA.

My household safe ?

BELAUNUS.

Where are your children ?

HODA.

With my wife.

BELAUNUS.

And she ?

HODA.

Beneath her own hearth.

BELAUNUS.

Dead ?

HODA.

Such things have been,
And will be so again—my children both,
At each side one.—Enough of this fool's talk.
I knew that you would grieve—speak not, Belaunus !
You might cast down my manhood with a look,
And make me shame my beard. Enough of this !
Speak no kind words ; I'm feeble as a child
That, pitied, weeps for pity of itself.

BELAUNUS.

Alas !

HODA.

No, not a word !

BELAUNUS.

God's above all !

HODA.

Give me your hand, this foolishness was wise ;
I might have choked in silence—let it pass.
A griev'd man sees no sorrows but his own ;
But, were the wish such as becomes a man,
Would I were dead !

Enter ATTENDANT.

BELAUNUS.

What now ?

ATTENDANT.

Orbo hath come from Mona.

HODA.

Ha !

ATTENDANT.

Half up the hill he and his horse sank down.
They bring him here, dumb almost with fatigue.

HODA.

Belaunus, I will tell you, ere he comes,
The news he brings. Rome hath our sacred nest
Seiz'd and defil'd. There needs no wearied post
To tell us that,—'t was in the course of things.

Enter ORBO (led in).

BELAUNUS.

Welcome, my son !

ORBO.

Ah, Hoda, thou art here !
Father, my thanks. I have some need of rest,—
But one word first, and then, when I have strength,
I will take horse and onwards to the Queen.

BELAUNUS.

What hath occur'd? Speak short. The Queen is here.

ORBO.

In brief, the Romans are possessed of Mona;
But their best troops are pent up in the isle.
The boisterous weather and great lack of boats
Keep them close-lock'd. They have ensnar'd themselves,
And all the South is open to our swords.

HODA.

Ho there! some one of you!
We have them on the hip. The next few hours
Stamp the hereafter of the growing age
With good or ill. Fate's wheel hath turn'd our way,
And we will roll it on!

BELAUNUS.

Will you not stay
To see the Queen?

HODA.

No, I have far to ride;
And the Queen cares not for my counsel. You,
Rouse up the Northern tribes—I my own coasts;
And look to hear of bloody Roman pates
Ere three days close. Camalodunum falls
Ere the sun sets to-morrow. Farewell, friend!

[Exit.]

BELAUNUS.

I will go find the Queen.

[Exit.]

D

SCENE III.

BOADICEA *on the ground.* Enter CHORUS and MAIDENS.

MAIDENS.

This way she bent her footsteps, drunk with grief.
Beside this knoll, her visage marr'd, we left her.
Her wild eyes wandered o'er the fields of Heaven,
Bright with grief's fever, and reproach'd the stars.

CHORUS.

See, on the grass
She languishes, bare in the winds of night,
Uncinctured, and expos'd to the keen air
Of the ic'd North.

BELAUNUS (*entering*).

Hold ye apart awhile.

Lady, thou art ungirdled, and the night
Breathes from a frozen throat :—
Think for thy people, if not for thyself;
And shake this dotage off. Thou art a Queen,—
Wear a more regal aspect in thy grief,
Nor grovel on the ground.

BOADICEA.

I do not grovel on the ground, old man !
But supplicate before the God of Heaven
In prayer's most lawful posture. Thou 'rt not wise
Thus to belie me and my sorrow's woof;
Which is of texture regal as e'er bound
Breasts form'd of clay. What dost thou seek of me ?

BELAUNUS.

Events tread swiftly on each other's heels ;
Man may accomplish oft within the hour,
That which, time lost, Heaven's self shall not retrieve.

BOADICEA.

What are thy news ?

BELAUNUS.

E'en now from Mona Orbo hath come in.

BOADICEA.

Quick ! the matter ?
Thou hast a hope of vengeance—see, I scent it !
Speak, am I right ?

BELAUNUS.

'T will be thine own fault if thou drink not deep.

BOADICEA.

Oh, the strong cordial ! It alone can warm
A heart so numb'd as mine.

Enter ORBO and others.

BOADICEA.

How dost thou, kinsman ?

ORBO.

Sick with long travel, but still fresh of heart.

BOADICEA.

Thou cam'st from Mona, say ?

ORBO.

Mona hath fallen.

BOADICEA.

God smite thee, man ! Is this thy proffered vengeance ?

[To BELAUNUS.

BELAUNUS.

Lady, I pardon thee

Thy tongue's impatience. Listen to the end.

BOADICEA.

Look you, a well of bitterness springs here ;
If its foam spatter thee, forgive me.—Speak !

[To ORBO.

ORBO.

It is but five days since I left the shore
Of Mona, swam the straits, and rode thus far.
The Roman General, Suetonius,
Attacked our isle ; two legions crossed the straits,
And some six hundred horse ; the first in boats,
The cavalry swam through. Along the shore,
Under the shadow of the sacred oaks,
The Druid fathers stood, invoking God,
With hands uprear'd tow'rds Heaven. Wild with despair,
Our women rush'd amidst the mustering ranks,
In funeral weeds, with torches in their hands,
And hair out-streaming to the rising wind ;

So loud they yell'd, that, still whilst on the waves,
The Romans paled with fear, and checked their oars,
The swimming steeds plunged round, and, all unhing'd,
The floating army seemed at point of flight.
Then did their leader, standing on the prow,
With hoarse voice hark them on ; he pointed back,
Where came a grizzly squall along the straits,
Wiping the mainland from our eyes with foam :
“ Death whoops behind us ! Seek his grave who will
“ In the rough waters, maugre hell, I land ! ”
And so he shorewards plung'd. Just at that point,
Ere they had clos'd with us, came Orus to me
(Mona's high priest), “ For life, for life, son, speed !
“ Swim through the straits, seek the Icenian Queen,
“ The Trinobantes and Silurian tribes ;
“ Bid all who have the courage to be free
“ Break through the yoke at once—now is the moment.”
More had he said,
But, through the temples smitten with a stone,
Fell headlong in the sea. I turned and sped
Along the shore, till clear of the great press,
And then essayed the foam ; three times washed back,
The tumbling waves that burst about my head
Had almost swamped me, till through the belly
Of a great wave I dived and reached green sea ;
Touched land at eve, exhausted ; late at night,
Betwixt two Roman sentries I stole past.
I silenced one, and breaking thus their lines,
Took horse, and came with speed of scourge and spur.

BOADICEA.

What more ?

ORBO.

From eve till near midnight
Vast sheets of flame and smoke rolled off the isle,
Tinging the headlands opposite with red,
And dyeing ocean, whose afflicted surge
Purpled like blood beneath. Upon the blast
Screams came and yells. Along the island's shore
Shadows confused went hurrying to and fro.
With my best speed I left such sights and sounds,
And hither sped, fire burning in my heart.

BOADICEA.

Well hast thou done, and Briton-like hast borne
Sorrow and danger.

[*Exit* ORBO.]

Ah me! our blood
Flows like the water of a wintry brook
To the insatiate ocean!

BELAUNUS.

See'st thou now
That the Gods fight for us? Rome's legions lie
Yonder entrapp'd; the winds of the equinox
Scour through the channel 'twixt the isle and main,
Winds counter tides, till the vex'd race grows mad
With war intestine, foam 'gainst foam spew'd high:
Amidst the toil and turmoil of the waves,
No boat, the bravest ever built, could live
More than an eggshell. Now this wind blows strong,
And will for many days,—the aged priest
Well knew the first flap of his rushing wings,
And e'en in death foresaw the dear advantage.

Enter ATTENDANT.

BOADICEA.

What now ?

ATTENDANT.

Upon the outskirts of the forest halt
A score of Roman horse, who have sent on
One of their number with a flag of truce,
Demanding parley with thee.

BOADICEA.

Wolves and hounds !

Bid him come here.

[Exit ATTENDANT.]

They are not yet aware
That their best fangs are drawn. God hath made folly
Of their great leader's wisdom.

CHORUS.

They had shared
With their swords' points the land, and ranked themselves
Amongst the demigods of earth ; they took
Wise counsel of each other to supplant,
If strength and cunning might, the hand of God ;
And march'd exulting into a fool's trap,
Where they lie harmless, nor can help their own,
Incapable though arm'd.

BOADICEA.

Give me my mantle and my javelin, girls ;
Make smooth my robes, and circle me about ;
They shall not know how much they 've shook my frame.

Enter ROMAN HERALD and Attendants.

BOADICEA.

Bloody swine,
That are replete with garbage!

[*Aside.*

You are in safety, Sirs!

But be not lengthy in the exercise
Of your commission, lest perchance the bow
Of my forbearance, being overstrung,
Start and so wound ye.

HERALD.

Though there needs no show
Of courtesy to such an untaught ear,
Savage or not, 'tis still the Roman fashion
To give a message with becoming leisure.

BOADICEA.

Down, down, black blood! They shall not so much triumph,
As to behold my visage change or pale.

[*Aside.*

Speak at thy leisure, since thy mind is 'slaved
To forms and wills despotic.
I will the while constrain myself to hear.

HERALD.

What I am charged to say
Requires no prologue, for I come not save
For thy advantage. Catus Decianus,
Prefect of London, sendeth to thee greeting.
Thou hast done foolishly, he bids me say,
To make resistance to the Roman force

Who sought thy dwelling in the course of duty,
And by injunction of authority,
To take that portion of the realm in care,
Which by thy husband, lately dead, was left
To Claudius, Emperor of the Roman world.
What deeds they did to thee, being crossed and chafed
By that ill-judged resistance, he regrets,
And is inclined to recompense such wrongs,
If thou art wise as he believes thou art. . . .
Your Lady faints.

BOADICEA.

Liar, no! I'm well.
Give me a seat. Proceed!

HERALD.

The Prefect says,
He seeks not now to break off amity,
Which 'twixt your husband King Prasutagus
And Rome existed. He was wise and good;
We counted him a friend, and for his sake
Doth Rome still wish the Icenian people well,
And their Queen also; but, for this late deed
That cost Rome blood, and hath unhinged the time
With bad example, as a future bond,
Rome will have hostages, and—

BOADICEA.

Speak no further!
You've said enough. I've seen the snake unfold,
And drawn his venom. Now, Sir Herald, stay,
And hear my answer—it is brief and pregnant.

'Twixt us and Rome hatred exists so deep,
That coexist we cannot,—water and fire
May in one vessel better far consort,
And hold each other with a friendly clasp.
I'll stifle Rome, or be by Rome consumed!

HERALD.

Thou hast ill chosen in thy list of foes
To mark Rome one. Yet till to-morrow pause.

BOADICEA.

Not till to-night, but now
Take my defiance. I am not ignorant
How ill thy Prefect is prepared for war,
And how encag'd your troops. What, more to say?

HERALD.

(Offering a girdle to the Queen.)

Madam, I bring a token from your child.
She bid me herewith say she was in health,
And Julius, her lord, is kind to her.

BOADICEA.

In health! my child! what child? I have no child—
Oh, God above!

HERALD.

Lady, your child is happy.

BOADICEA.

Bear then this javelin to my daughter's heart,
That can endure her life in Roman hands!

[Throws her javelin, which sticks in a tree.]

CHORUS.

Madam, forbear !

BOADICEA.

Fools, had I indeed sought life,
My javelin had not bit the aged oak
But through his body.—Take him away.
—Stay, listen, Sir ! If I have injured you,
Press'd by my passion and a feverish blood,
Accepting this, you shall the wrong forgive.
[Giving him a gold chain.]

HERALD.

Have you no message, Queen ! I may deliver ?

BOADICEA.

Nothing, nothing ! nothing in life to her,—
But to your leader, bid him gird his loins !
By Heaven, I swear the coming war shall be
Extermination, sword-stroke and firebrand
To those who are undermost.
—Get to your horses, redden all your spurs,
Or you may hear my war-hounds on your track.
[Exeunt Herald and Romans. BOADICEA lifts up the girdle.]
Poor wretched token of a bleeding name,
Might my lips burn thee !

[Kissing it.]

Cradle awhile upon this stormy sea,—

[Putting it in her bosom.]

I would not pluck thy darling image forth,
But let it fade as the mirk night comes down,
And my heart petrifies.

[Exeunt Queen and Chiefs.]

CHORUS.

Blow the bull's horn upon the bleak hill-sides !
Far flies the East wind to the Western ocean ;
Fast the South blast across the mountain strides,
Into the North, leaving those narrow tides
Where Gaul looks down upon the great bay's motion.
Over the island, far and round,
On the wind's back rides the tumultuous sound.

STROPHE I.

Icenian matrons start, and maids turn wan ;
The fruit at childhood's lip is checked in fear ;
His seat o'erturn'd, in haste man hurries on
Harness and mantle, snatches sword and spear,
Shadows his threshold, listens, and is gone,—
His young wife, gazing, sees him disappear.
Old age sits muttering, toothless, in the sun ;
Whilst frightened infancy his face veils o'er,
Close in his mother's lap, and seeks his sport no more.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Far off, along Sabrina's wood-girt strand,
At dawn the ravening bear is brought to bay ;
But, ere the twilight lightens into day,
Again he roams in freedom through the land.
Call'd to a bloodier sport, their chase given o'er,
The hunters leave him by the sedgy shore.

STROPHE II.

On the Silurian meadow's grassy soil,
Or where the new-turn'd earth gives odour after showers,
Father and sons are at their daily toil.

Cloud-high, and sitting 'mid the mountain flowers,
The watchful mother spins her worsted coil,—
About her knees her maidens ply for hours ;
Around her, near, the eager nibblers stray,
Over the upland vale, among the scarp'd rocks gray ;
And her old hound hath prick'd his sharp-cut ears,
And twice hath circled round the peaceful throng
With head laid low,—again the hoarse sound hears,
And bays a warning, which the hills prolong.
Cast on the ridges lies the new-reap'd seed,—
Father and sons are gone, with breathless speed.

ANTISTROPHE II.

The Roman sentry, on the Faustinian mound,
Ere dawn appear'd,
With straining vision through the darkness peer'd.
Amid the hills arose an uncouth sound.
With keen ear rais'd against the cutting blast,
Watchful he turns,—hark ! faintly floating past,
Again upon his sense the sound is feebly cast ;
And quick upon the ling'ring ray
That lightens in the East, he fixes his regard,
Judges how long may lag the coming day,
And, intent, holds his long-pent breathing hard,—
Then, sudden, his compeers to warn,
Casts on the winds the doubling clangour of his horn.

*

STROPHE III.

Heard ye Time's footfall? Hush! he strides along,
Dragging the unwilling morrow by the hair,
Over the purple waters, and among
The misty mountains; fain were she to share
Night's veil of darkness,—evils round her throng.
Weeping, she shudders in the gelid air.
What sees she yonder in the northern gray,
To scare the rosy blush of youth away?

• ANTISTROPHE III.

I see Death sitting on yon vapoury hill,
His elbows on his knees, his stony eyes
Fix'd on the earth. The hoary seas lie still,
Mute 'neath the shadow of his form, which lies
Far o'er the sluggish waters. Cold and chill
The Northern winds from off his shoulders rise,—
Frozen they wander o'er the shuddering world.
About his feet the storms their wings have furl'd.
Yon dreary horn hath rous'd him from his dream.
The sad earth quakes, the night-winds faintly scream.

FULL CHORUS.

So bursts the horrible horn upon the world.
From every upland and green hill descend
Our armed children—what shall be the end?
When ye have gathered all the manly fruit
That the land bears, and on the parent root
No remnant stock is left, and all are hurl'd

Into the press of battle, who shall say
Whether, to frenzied madness driven
By the fix'd will of fate, we cast away
Our latest hopes, or, heaven-inspired, be given
Purpose to struggle till the latest breath,
To drag forth freedom from the jaws of death !

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A Forest near London—time, towards morning.

Enter BOADICEA and attendant MAIDEN.

BOADICEA.

Hath no one heard me ?

ATTENDANT.

None.

BOADICEA.

No one been near ?

ATTENDANT.

All has been still since I dismiss'd the guard.

BOADICEA.

Whither are they gone ?

ATTENDANT.

About yon dying fire

They are retir'd ; nearer hath no one dared.

BOADICEA.

That was well done. Come, my poor child, shake not ;
Have I much frighted thee ?

ATTENDANT.

It is not fear ;

But you look yet all pale.

BOADICEA.

Pshaw! it is past.

I've struggled from the blackness of the pit,
And all goes well. The night is nearly spent.
My gallant little nurse! give me thine hand.
Thou hast a loving palm,—we will find one
Fitted to noose these fingers with love-knots,
If all goes well. Hast thou ne'er seen a face
That took away thy breath?

ATTENDANT.

No, Lady, none.

BOADICEA.

Indeed, not one? Of this distemper, girl!
Let no one know—not thy most loving friend;
Nor, in the foolish fancy to do well,
Betray it to thine elders. 'Tis a rage,
Which, from the heated temper of my blood,
Springs up, and hurries for a time the mind
Out of its sober flow. Say not a word on 't
To any one.

ATTENDANT.

Though I obey thy will,
Fain would I have thee seek a councillor.
Hoda returns, I think they say, to-night.

BOADICEA.

Ha! As you value life, keep your tongue mute.
I love not Hoda; many years ago
He stood betwixt me and my husband's love.
I charge you keep my secret—on your life!

ATTENDANT.

Let me be torn in pieces, what you please—
My love will keep me silent.

BOADICEA.

Hush, no more !
Yonder they come. Now, little maid, retire ;
Get thee to sleep, here is our spy returned.

[*Exit ATTENDANT.*]

Enter BELAUNUS, HODEIRA, ORBO, CHORUS, Soldiers, &c.

HODEIRA.

How didst thou pass
Into the city ?

ORBO.

With the flying crowds,
Which sought in thousands shelter from its walls,
Led by Petilius and his cavalry,
Who fled thus far, nor drew their bridle-reins
E'en there.

BOADICEA.

So may their leaders ever fly,
And so abandon to our eager swords
Their scattered soldiers ! Not a single man
Of the ninth legion can Petilius blame,
Or speak in his dispraise,—not one survives.
How went it then ?

ORBO.

Hither and thither fled the random crowds,
Scattered about the vicinage for miles,
Or mew'd behind stone walls, with terror faint.

The northern sky bore crimson proof each night
Of burning champaigns. Day by day, pale forms,
Draggled with blood and dirt, came up in troops,
Spreading dismay's infection. Much I mix'd
Amongst the multitudes, and heard them tell
How strange portents prefigured mighty change,—
That the Colossus of the world reel'd round,
Sick with a mortal thrust; they fear'd for Rome,
And her great empire's fall. Meantime the storm,
Over the forest towards the Eastern shores,
In distant thunders seem'd to die away.

BOADICEA.

The rest in brief—

ORBO.

E'en in that hour, whilst expectation check'd
The breath of all, and each one stood at gaze,
There rose a murmur that Suetonius came,
He and his victor legions; the news spread,—
Shamefaced fear was no more seen abroad,
And all the riot of unhop'd reprieve
Roar'd through the city. In the hour of rest,
Which followed closely this unmeasured joy,
I, from the walls within whose circuit lay
The sleeping city, by the moon's faint light,
Sped here to meet you on your secret march.

BOADICEA.

Let them believe themselves secure from us,
Replete with unthrift confidence, and sing
Their idol's praises. The swift bolt shall fall,
Straight from God's hand, out of serenest heavens!

HODEIRA.

But of Suetonius?

ORBO.

Report speaks loud of him.

BOADICEA.

Report lies loud!

Pent by God's grace and the contentious waves
Into an island, with his hardiest troops,
There he shall starve. Bid the horns sound to arms.

[The horns sound at intervals; the people throng up.]

What hours of march will place us underneath
These London walls? We will accomplish it
Ere the day dawns, if speed and strength will hold.

ORBO.

Two hours, not more. The second watch was set
Ere I took way; the time of year gives night
Ten hours of dark; there's time enough to do it,
And a half hour to spare. Lady, a word,—

[Takes the Queen aside.]

I saw her, but far off—

BELAUNUS.

This monstrous growth,
This leprous empire shall not live for aye!
Canker'd with lusts, foul with the crimes of hell,
Will its unwieldy members rot each day,
And fall off piecemeal; the o'er-aged beast
Be by the wolves that populate the North
Rent till it howl; its giant carcase shall
Be food for many a savage maw, and fill

A younger world with fragments of its bones.
Rome's seed shall lack the manliness of heart
That warms the common breast, and on the soil
From whence their sires laid load upon the world,
Be ground to dust, licking the hand that grinds,
More vile in vice than apes.

HODEIRA (*to the Queen*).

Another effort, and we burst a thrall
That binds the breadth of earth,—then uncheck'd joy,
With honour'd life, and prosperous years to come !

BOADICEA.

For me still sorrow, thrive or fail, still woe !
Couldst thou but see beneath this fleshly screen,
How quenchless pangs and yearnings for the past
Tyrrannise here ! I could sit down and weep
Till life be drain'd—I am o'ertask'd, crush'd down.
Bring here more torches ; all is dark about—
Stand wide and give me breath.—Hearken, each one !
Soldiers and subjects, allies, all, all, all—
Speak to them, Father, I shall choke !

HODEIRA.

How art thou, Lady ?

BOADICEA.

Better ; give me wine.

[*Drinks.*]

BELAUNUS.

Be all accursed in yon town of blood,
And damn'd be he who touches of her spoils !

Fire all the gates, sink her devoted walls,
Crumble her palaces to stones and dust !
Let the grain smoulder where 't is garner'd up,
And into ash subside ! The glowing stuffs
That robe her halls—burn them to tinder,—
They are infected with the stench of crime !
All riches that the covetous regard
With the eyes' lust, let them be swift consumed,
Gulf'd in the stream, or scattered to the winds !
Each thing that draws of the sweet milk of life,
Strike down and slay, on pain of curse and death !
Millions of dead hold you to strict account,
Avengers of their blood :—From the great tide
That laves the vast shores of the nether world
Unto the Western ocean, blood ascends
That hath not been appeas'd ; since olden time,
When first yon tyrants learn'd their conquering arts,
Even till now, it crimson on mine eyes,
And murmurs in mine ears ! Your forefathers
From out their cloud-ribb'd palaces look forth,
And cite ye to the toil,—all they that fell
Through the long summer days, for their homes' sake,
Their partners', and the fruitage of their loins—

BOADICEA (*casting away the cup*).

Upon the wafting blast scream “Slay ! slay ! slay !”
—Young men, beware lest comeliness of form
Blunt your keen swords, or wake in ye remorse,—
Your mangled sisters, with their virgin flowers
Uptorn and bloody, turn your hearts to stone,—
Smite her sheer down—cleave through the lovely face—
Over her step, nor waste a look behind !

—Ye men espoused,
Spare not the mother when she screens her babe,
Her suckling, with her bosom,—on the blast
Follow the clamours of thy toothless seed,
And their dead mothers' wail—fell them down all—
The aged earth gapes wide to swallow all.
—What woe comes next?

Enter HODA and a MESSENGER.

HODA.

No woe, but warning, Madam.
The Roman legions have from Mona march'd,
And are encamp'd within two leagues of London.

BOADICEA.

I will believe eye-witnesses, none else.

HODA.

A trusted servant of my own but now
Came with this news,—here stands the fellow—speak !
He was eye-witness to their eve's encampment.
Speak, knave !

MESSENGER.

Madam, at sunset they broke ground,
And soon entrench'd themselves.
The fourteenth legion, with such veterans
As from Camalodunum had escaped,
Were there ; with these, and with six German cohorts,
The twentieth legion, and auxiliaries
From the adjacent stations—

HODA.

That might be
Hard on ten thousand men.—Who held command?

MESSENGER.

Suetonius.

BOADICEA.

Let him tarry till we come,
Fresh from the fold! One day of full revenge,
And afterwards—

HODA.

Consider first, O Queen!
What thou wouldst do. Where is thy judgment fled?
Let thy revenge at least be open-eyed.
What! cast ourselves, like a ferocious beast,
Upon a vile and unresisting prey,
To gorge upon the carcase till unfit
For fight or flight, whilst lies a wary foe
Within the distance of a well-breath'd hail,
Watching the advantage of a careless hour
To crush us down?

BOADICEA.

One day of full revenge—
Then will we meet Suetonius man to man,
And see what Heaven resolves.

HODA.

Mere fumes of hate,
And not sane words! Come, Lady! I've the right
Of an old man to speak. My hairs grew gray

Doing thy husband service ; I was one
Then often trusted ; all his mind to me
Was open as a book, wherein I learn'd
Many a wise experience—

BOADICEA.

None now
Can serve the turn.—Every one, go arm—

[Exeunt all but HODA.]

HODA.

Thou blind with passion ! I foresaw this hour,
Far off yet sure, and mark'd the certain sign
Within thine eyes—
In the clear sky a sign, a little cloud,
Precursor of wild storm and hideous wreck.
—I will collect a body of old friends,
And face Suetonius' legions with some force,
And keep him thus in check,—
That and kind fortune is our only chance.

[Exit.]

A C T I V.

SCENE I.

Temple of Jupiter in London — Statue of Jupiter, and lustral vase. — Noise as of sacking of a city — Screams, &c. Enter BOADICEA, Soldiers, &c., CHORUS driving Romans before them. — Several Romans are lying on the ground — Amongst these is JULIUS dying.

BOADICEA.

What, pause upon the climax of revenge?
 Need ye the kindling of a woman's breath
 To make your valour glow? When I desist,
 Must ye, my reapers, on your sickles rest,
 As if the work were done? Up to the roofs—
 Hurl every Roman from the terraced heights;
 Splinter the marble pavements down below
 With their crush'd limbs. Begone!

[*Exeunt all but the QUEEN.*

(*Gazing on the body of JULIUS.*)

Here triumphs my revenge! Behold, he sits,
 Crowned as a king, upon his regal throne,
 The prostrate body of my evil doer!
 Ah! thou didst tear away from me my child,
 When her dove's eyes had heal'd the brutal stripes
 I had receiv'd,—her innocent face e'en then
 Left me all darkling in the void, alone,
 An earth without the solace of a sun.
 What thou didst else, God knows,—I triumph now,
 And trample on thy neck!

Thou flickering lamp, the vital oil drops fast
From thy poor lips! Thou art yet young for this :
Thy youth pleads for thee to a woman's heart.
—Here is infirmity of will complete!
Flimsy as morning's veil is woman's purpose.
Oh! fool of pity, he hath soiled thy child—
Yet he may render thee thy child again.

JULIUS.

My tongue cleaves to my mouth. For sake of heaven,
Give me a little water, if thou hast
A woman's pity.

BOADICEA (*giving him to drink*).

Here, drink of this!
'T was destined for the service of thy God,
And will serve thee.

JULIUS.

Blest be thy kindly hands!

[*Drinks.*

BOADICEA.

Dost thou remember me?

JULIUS.

Thou, pale Medusa? No!—unless it be
The ghastly coinage of some feverish dream,
Which haunts me in the aspect of thy face.

BOADICEA.

Not recollect?

JULIUS.

Art thou o' the earth indeed ?
Thou dost resemble one who holds my heart
In the free bondage of an innocent love,
As death apes life. Say, what art thou ?

BOADICEA.

A queen.

JULIUS.

How they did scourge thee, I remember now ;
Take thy revenge, and spare me thy wild looks.

BOADICEA.

My child, my daughter, give me back my child,
And I will worship thee !

JULIUS.

She is beyond
Thy scorning or thy loving, and is safe.
Thy frenzied weapon, or thy frantic kiss,
Shall ne'er approach her more.

BOADICEA.

Do I devour
The fruit of mine own womb ? am I so horrible ?

JULIUS.

Think of the Herald and thine erring spear,
And answer for thyself.

BOADICEA.

Is't so believed? Does she believe it so?
I who have borne her, who have cherished her
From this sad well of love! who from her lips
Drew childish laughter with a mother's rapture,
Watch'd, tended, guarded her fair maidenhood,
Till my heart ached with its excess of love—
Am I become a bugbear to her now,
That she avoids me?
I who have suffered for her sake, God knows!
Oh heaven, oh earth, within your circling arms
Can aught be matched to this? Where is she fled?

JULIUS.

Whither I hoped to follow her, but death
Here gripes me close.

BOADICEA.

Confess to me,
In my child's blood thou didst infuse some drug,
To turn her pure affections from their source,
Which flow'd towards me? If such indeed thou didst,
And wilt confess, now lingering on death's threshold,
I'll give thee my forgiveness—when we meet
On the dim shore, I shall have nought to say
That will raise asps about thy youthful brows,
But pass thee with a sigh.

JULIUS.

By no distempering drugs I gained thy child;
Love's strong infection, breathing from my lips,
Took hold of her young heart.

BOADICEA.

Rot i' the earth !

[Strikes him with her spear.]

JULIUS.

Oh Jove !

[Dies.]

BOADICEA.

“ Oh Jove ! ”

—Thou filthy advocate of deeds abhorred,
Fall with thy votary !

[Strikes the statue.]

Enter CHORUS and Soldiers.

Strike down yon idol, fire the piles of wood
That are stack'd yonder—burn the temple down ;
Cover this body with a linen cloth,
And cast it on the flames—
Let them all burn in face of God and man.

[Exeunt Soldiers.]

Wretched, oh ! wretched past endurance grows
The burthen of my life ! What keeps me here
Above the clods of the valley ?
Oh ! for some spot, a quiet nook i' the hills,
Where the last sunbeams sleep—some murmuring stream
To sing my natural dirge ! What signifies
One blind existence in this close-cramm'd world ?
Thick spins the eddying smoke along the walls ;
Flames leap and sink ; along the eastern face
The fire takes hold—now could I soar away,
Girdled about by the triumphant blaze,
Mount the swift blast and strike the course to hell,
With the huge scurry of a conquered host,

Wailing through clouds and moonshine, in my rear—
Into the realm of death to burst amain,
And hold my triumph there!

Enter MALVINA.

What step is that? Poor, trembling limbs hold up!
'T is hers—she comes, she's here! Malvina!
My little one, my life—close, close—ah me!

MALVINA.

Mother, oh mother! clasp me to thy heart,—
Closer, still tighter; never, never more
Unwind from me thy loving arms again,—
Here will I rest.

BOADICEA.

Spent with the turmoil, little one, take heart;
Hush, dear! and mix not sobs and laughter thus;
All is well ended.

MALVINA.

Mother, I'm very cold.

BOADICEA.

Quake not, be quiet; here, secure at last,
In the close haven of my breast lie calm;
No storm shall shake thee more, but all be still!

MALVINA.

Mother! mother!

BOADICEA.

Both thy dear hands are dead—

Here in my bosom place them ; see, unclasp
This churlish brooch, and nourish them within.
Kiss me again ; oh, thou art much in debt
To me in this, and I am jealous of thee.
Shall we go forth and leave this burning fane ?

MALVINA.

Never again, no ! never more I 'll mix
With my old playmates,—here 't is fit I die—
Think I in April died, a little while
Before my father, in my early spring
And maiden freshness. Let my image still
Seem dear to thee—Alas, ah me ! go ! go !

BOADICEA.

Malvina, hush !

MALVINA.

Mother, for God's sake, go !
Leave me ; oh ! let me kiss your feet ! now, go !
Ah ! do not seek to read aught in my eyes,
Or I must hide them.

[Hides her face in her mother's knees.]

BOADICEA.

Here, my blood, my soul !
Speak to me, tell me all thy griefs ; fear nought.

MALVINA.

I'm very drowsy.

BOADICEA.

Little one, take rest ;
And I will once more rock thee in mine arms,

Close up thine eyelids with this tender kiss,
—I dream yet in this sudden happiness,
And tremble for the waking, lest all fade
Into the void of air.—Crown of my life!
Why, thy closed lids stream like the dropping wells—
Alas, what ails thee now?

MALVINA.

If he is dead,
Then I must follow! Mother, hear me speak.
Draw not away your hands, no, no, no, no—
Then I have nothing but the cold hard earth
To cast me on.

[Throws herself on the ground.]

BOADICEA.

Child! he hath poisoned thee with secret drugs,
And filch'd thy loving heart away from me
By charms and spells unholy—let him go!
A sable cloud, whose flash and roar being spent,
Rides past on the vex'd wind!

MALVINA.

Not so, my mother!
Kind is he, courteous, generous and true,
And gained by love what he had power to take;
Oh! I have given him all with my free will,
Love, life, and all!

BOADICEA.

Venom, venom, venom!
Which raises lies upon the truest lips
That e'er blushed red for shame! Yes, he hath own'd—

MALVINA.

Mother, he lives! He's here, unhurt, unharm'd!

[Embraces her mother.]

BOADICEA.

Subdue this flood of miserable joy.
Child, girl, go mad! Canst thou yet cherish one
Who in thy heart hath rais'd a crop of weeds,
Sown in the dark, and by illicit means?
Weep not, but speak! Malvina, on thy words
An irrevocable decree rides forth,
And we must bide the bent.

MALVINA.

Alas, too well!

BOADICEA.

Be still! Upon your garments see you that?
This purple soak suck'd up from the wet stones?
This is his blood—and yonder tongues of fire
Devour his body!

[MALVINA staggers and falls.]

Now have I killed her, nipt i' the bud past cure;
She bleeds at the mouth! thy pretty lips are marr'd—
Dumb portals where the sweetest breath o' the world
Exhales away. Pluck'd flowers, I'll seal ye up!

[Kisses her.]

We'll rise no more, my child, but here remain
To feed the ravenous flames.

MALVINA.

Ah! kiss me not; I'll die without thy kiss.
Here is my blood to dabble in, here his—

Hast thou shed both, thou cruel mother?—Say,
Have I not loved thee well? Is't time to rise?
The full moon still is hurrying thro' the sky—
She looks more red than when we loved her first.
Sweetheart, thine arm is cold about my neck,
Cold as chill marble—Is it time to go?
—Thou shalt not keep me from him! What art thou?
Gorgon, I'm not thy child!

[Breaks from her.]

BOADICEA (*following*).

Daughter! Daughter!

[Exeunt.]

Enter CHORUS wildly—smeared with blood, armed with swords, and bearing torches.

CHORUS.

Vict'ry complete! triumph sublime!
Where God struck for us, and our hurrying van
Could not o'ertake his tidal wrath, which ran
Before our front, nor ebb'd. His viewless sword
Th' embattled ramparts of their city bored,
And through their columned dwellings drove,
Resistless, dire! Naked they strove
From out their secret lairs of crime,
Naked in face of God. Destruction peals!
No friend above to mark their groans—
The judge is deaf to crime's appeals.
Where are their deities—their stocks, their stones?
Close wrapp'd in fire the drunken city reels,
No more to wanton in the lap of time.
Vict'ry complete! triumph sublime!

STROPHE.

Her cup was full ere God had spoke
His damning sentence ; the suspended stroke
O'er her, self-blinded, hung,—Heaven's last sun-shine
Lay on the slumb'ring city, wallowing and supine.
Last night did eunuchs, in lascivious ring,
Warble soft measures to the indecent swing
Of amorous dancers ; ribald laughter broke
From each intemperate crew.
To the close-practised sins of years,
Like innocence, devoid of fears,
The secret guilty drew.
A vile security their souls had bound.
Beneath them yawn'd the perilous abyss ;
Whilst, mad with wine and with vine garlands crown'd,
Upon the brink of hell they reel'd in drunken bliss.

ANTISTROPHE.

Long since remorseful Heaven forewarning sent
Of wrath up-surg'ing ; the presaging sound
Of hideous clamours rung their temples round,
And tongues unknown the midnight silence rent.
Nightly a Seer, who, moonlit, pass'd
Along the tranquil river, where before
Their piled city towered up the shore,
Saw ruins huge o'er many an acre cast,
Brought to perdition by some fiery blast.

FULL CHORUS.

Ripe grew the hour ; the word went forth,—
And the resistless deluge of God's wrath
 Upon their heads, without revoke,
From a despised quarter came.
On their backs, in sword and flame,
 Pitiless the tempest broke.
From nauseous sleep, confus'd and mazed,
They woke to death,—above them blazed
 The unremitting stroke ;
Ere they had fetch'd their breath, and cried,
 The reeking sword was drawn away ;
They gap'd and shuddered, gasp'd and sighed,
 And faded into clay.

Enter MESSENGER.

Hoda hath sent me to the Queen in haste.
Although he holds the legions in some check,
They press him hard, and drive him from his ground.
He bid me say, retire towards the South,
Or all is lost.

BOADICEA (*without*).

Daughter ! Daughter ! Daughter !

CHORUS.

Listen ! Who cries ?

BOADICEA.

Help ! help !

CHORUS.

'Tis the Queen's voice !

BOADICEA.

She burns, she burns ! Let go my knees—
She waves her arm—mercy, oh, mercy !

ATTENDANT (*entering*).

Her daughter hath, but now, leap'd i' the flames.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

A battle field by the sea-cliffs. — Night, a storm.

Enter HODEIRA and followers ; and, meeting them, BELAUNUS and CHORUS.

HODEIRA.

What ho, Belaunus ! Doth the Queen yet live ?

BELAUNUS.

That I had trusted to have learn'd of you.

HODEIRA.

I was borne off by the full tide of flight
Into the hills,—
Oh, what a rabblement of woe was there !
The screams and uproar of so great a rout
Dumb'd the hoarse roar of the descending storm.

BELAUNUS.

That is cold comfort ! Since the night grew dark,
I have sought over that part of the plain
Where the Queen was at sunset. This fierce storm
Makes all search fruitless.

HODEIRA.

Think you there's hope yet ?

BELAUNUS.

If she survive, why still some hope remains.

HODEIRA.

Alas, Belaunus ! how hath judgment fail'd
And pandered to a passion unconstrain'd !
The Queen hath lost all guidance,—even but now
We let salvation ooze from out our palms
Twice ere the day was lost.

BELAUNUS.

The worst must be retrieved.

HODEIRA.

Where are the means ?

BELAUNUS (*to Chorus*).

Not yet give up the search for her, dear friends !
Hold your hearts on beyond this dismal hour ;
Our star burns yet, tho' it look dim in heaven.

HODEIRA.

Oh, hideous carnage of a people doom'd,
By this night's tempest thou art made complete !
An army squandered and a battle lost—
A nation wreck'd, a race enslav'd, our men
Strew'd on the plain like dead weeds of the sea
On sterile shores, where the swollen wave subsides—
What's to be done ?

BELAUNUS.

Not this that thou dost do—
Aid the rough tempest to discourage those
Who would strive still.

HODEIRA.

Strive on ; I'm with you, friend !
We will face out our evils to the last,—
My blood is yet unchill'd.
What troop comes yonder, scatter'd thro' the storm ?
They should be friends by their dejected mien.

BELAUNUS.

Mothers and wives hovering about their dead.
The foe will send out parties thro' the field
Before the dawn,—we must bestir ourselves.
What, Hoda !

Enter HODA (borne in).

HODA.

But the dregs of him.

HODEIRA,

(taking his hand and looking at his wound).

Alas !

HODA.

The better part of him ebbs fast away.

HODEIRA.

Bind up his wound.

HODA.

'T is not the failing of these corporal powers,
Altho' the faculty of life sinks low,—
A word, one word—All's lost! The Queen is dead!

BELAUNUS.

Then have we cherished a last hope in vain.

HODEIRA.

How dost thou know?

BELAUNUS.

Did you behold her die?

HODEIRA.

As the shorn sun went down into the haze,
A little ere the tempest broke on us,
I saw her fall.
I saw her thro' the stormy atmosphere
Upon her car, in the red light emblazed;
Her gesture spoke a settled scorn of life.
I had predicted this since her child's death.
She swoop'd towards the impenetrable foe
On the huge swing of the last wave o' the fight;
Then burst the human billow, back recoil'd,
And left its wrack behind.—I fell from this,

[*Pointing to his wound.*]

And the reflux of men; but, as I rose,
Over the mounds of slaughter bounding came
Horses and empty car with blood defiled—
Well known of all, her horses and her car.
Then follow'd turmoil, and dismay, and flight.

BELAUNUS.

Wretched, predestined, headstrong Queen ! thyself
Hast all confounded in thy reckless hate.
And then, to pluck death on thee to end all—
'T was not well done ! Hadst thou been living still,
We had hoped still ; but with thy fall the cord
That bound our tribes together bursts, and who
Shall reunite them ?

HODEIRA.

Thy wound takes cold,—wrap him about with this.

HODA.

Dear friend, it serves not—cold or heat no more
Shall trouble me.—I charge you, ere I die,
You do not leave her royalty exposed
To lie indecent on a heap of slain,
To the rude comment of the greedy foe.

[Faints.]

BELAUNUS.

I will not quit the field
Till I have laid her in the pitying earth,
Beyond all insult. Thou, Hodeira ! give
To Britain's shepherdless and scattered flock
Thine instant care. Upon the Northern hills
Gather the remnants of our broken tribes,
And lead them northwards—I will follow thee
By dawn of day. Let some of you remain,
And tend on Hoda,—when he shall revive,
Bear him towards the hills.—

[Exeunt BELAUNUS and Attendants.]

HODEIRA.

He 's gone into the blackness of the night,
As he would ne'er return. Hoda, farewell !
Thus breaks the fellowship of forty years,
As 't were the snapping of a frosted twig,
And I remain alone. Oh, God of heaven !
How the fierce lightning rends night's veil in twain,
And lights this slaughter-house for miles on miles !
Attend him, children ! bring him on with care
Should he revive.

[*Exeunt HODEIRA and Attendants.*]

CHORUS.

Roar out, ye clouds, your dismal peals of woe,
And drown our puny faculties of grief
With the full burst of your disburthening breasts !
Hailstones, heaven's frozen tears, rattle down fast,
And strew the earth with winter ! Wind and sleet,
Hurry up shrouds about our mangled sons,
That now lie stark tow'rds heaven ! Alas, for us,
The remnants of a nation, nationless—
Britons this morning, now without a name—
Unqueen'd, unpeopled, blotted from the roll
Of earth's free races—lost past cure of God !
The heavens take fire about us ; hide your heads—
How the earth rocks !

Enter BOADICEA.

ONE OF THE CHORUS.

The Queen !

ANOTHER OF THE CHORUS.

Where ?

ONE OF THE CHORUS.

There where the lightning plays—
See you how pale, how pale !

CHORUS.

God keep us sane !

ONE OF THE CHORUS.

How still she stands, and strangely fixes us !
No pulse of life beats in those shrunken veins.

ANOTHER.

She moves away in silence as she came,
Unchallenged by us. Shall we speak to her ?
See how it fades away !

[*Exit BOADICEA.*]

HODA (*recovering*).

What whisper ye ?
Why peer ye thro' the darkness of the storm ?
What do ye see ?

CHORUS.

The Queen, as once she lived.

HODA.

Where is she gone ? Did ye not speak to her ?
Did she say aught ? Oh, ye have acted ill
To let her pass unquestioned. How did she look ?

CHORUS.

Through the obscure she fixed her eyes on us,
And, like a lion on his watch, passed on,
Whilst we were turned to stone.

HODA.

Ye've quailed like girls,
And I have err'd most wofully, that thought
Her dead without just cause. Follow her steps—
Shame on ye all! Retrieve your fault like men,
And trace her out.

CHORUS.

At least let two remain
To tend on you.

HODA.

Quick, every man, begone! Would I could rise!
Go, tell Belaunus that the Queen survives—
Rally our friends!

[*Exit* CHORUS.]

I've wandered the last time
On the hill tops I loved!
Might I but see this shifting story close—
But the old bellman rings his warning peal,
And I am summoned—Ha!

Enter BOADICEA.

'Tis flesh and blood, but oh, how changed, how wan!

BOADICEA (*coming forward*).

One—two—three
Upon my track—Hush! they are all at fault.

Starved hounds, I'll baffle ye, tho' the keen wind
Blow his loud horn in heaven.

HODA.

There is a wandering terror in her eye ;
Shall I speak yet ?

BOADICEA.

Their fangs are made of steel ; let them give tongue—
I'll crouch, and they'll sweep past.

[Crouches down close by HODA.]

HODA.

Boadicea !

BOADICEA.

Who calls ?

HODA.

Boadicea !

BOADICEA.

Hush ! do not blab me to the pursuing wind,—
Be still, thou bleeding clay !

HODA.

Oh, thou art ill !

BOADICEA.

Cleft to the heart—in the left side struck through—
Thou canst not plumb it with a fathom line—

HODA.

Alas! thy subjects seek thee through the field,
And claim thy presence as their only light.

BOADICEA.

To me all's dark; no more sun on the earth,
No moon, no stars; dimm'd are the gems of heaven,
And, muffled up, the perfect eye of God
Visits no more the world.

HODA.

Oh, royal lady!

[Storm continues.]

BOADICEA.

Who shouts i' the sky?
Ah, gossip vengeance, keep thy sweet voice still!
I've no more blood to give thee from these veins;
Go, cater to thine appetite elsewhere—
But from man's blood refrain.

[Thunder.]

HODA.

This storm mars all.

BOADICEA.

Hark, how the rout comes tumbling thro' the clouds—
Stoop, let the tumult pass above our heads,—
Duck your crown'd pates, ye proud ones of the earth,
Whilst God rides by!

HODA.

Her wits go far astray.
Will no friend come? Lady! my Queen! my Queen!

BOADICEA.

What man art thou ?

HODA.

Thy kinsman Hoda.

BOADICEA.

He ?

He is beneath the earth ; he uttered truth.
Be not puff'd up with haughtiness of heart ;
For at the unblest'd portals of proud ears
Hell lurks, and warbles music night and day,
That stifles truth with the delicious song,
And sweetly brings perdition on the soul.
Trust not thy heart !

[Storm dies away, and the moon comes out.]

The elements no more
Will render back her dear life to mine arms,
Whom the flames burn'd—
Sweet bird, long lost and new return'd from cage
To greet thy parent with thy ravishing voice,
And in the very prelude of the song
To break my heart !

HODA.

I die, and no one comes !

Lady, I die ; if thou dost nourish love
Towards thy home, and the young innocent lives
Of our poor orphans which depend on thine,
Fly not thy people who are seeking thee.
Oh ! Farewell.

[Dies.]

BOADICEA.

Hush! The earth utters secrets in mine ear—
Keep still, thou muttering deity within—
Farewell!—This is the chant that time
Sings in our ears from the first breath of life,
Till the quick sense be quenched.—All this seems
The unreal image of a time foregone,
Past, and yet present—this desolate plain,
Thus sadden'd by the splendour of the moon,
Where the dead lie in heaps; sounds heard as then;
Words, aspects, circumstance, conspire to mock me—
Things glimmer double-visaged and far off,
Till I am giddy.

[Distant shout.]

They shout behind—On the blue hills of heaven
The shepherd wind pipes to the wandering clouds,
And the pale moon comes forth.

[Shout repeated.]

They shout again!

[Exit hurriedly.]

ONE OF THE CHORUS.

There in the moonlight! see, it glides away
Towards the cliffs! Follow, oh follow her!

CHORUS.

Thou art deceiv'd; 'twas never her thou sawest.

ONE OF THE CHORUS.

Listen! A distant hail—Ho there! Halloo!

SCENE I.

BOADICEA — A TRAGEDY.

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CHORUS.

Hark you again, the Roman camp's astir;
The gray of morning dapples the cold east—
Time! Time!

Enter BELAUNUS.



Begone from hence upon your several tracks!
Our toils are ended, and the game is closed.
From the high cliff into the sea beneath
The Queen has plunged.

THE END.

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